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Paul earns Exceptional Achievement Award

by **Melissa Witihrow, Air Vehicles Directorate**

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Clare Paul, Air Force Research Laboratory's Air Vehicles Directorate, recently received NASA's Exceptional Achievement Medal. Paul, VA's chief information officer, was honored for his "exceptional service and dedication in support of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board during a period of national tragedy".

Signed by NASA Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, this honor is one of NASA's most prestigious honor awards presented for outstanding contributions to NASA's mission.

The investigation board requested Paul's assistance for the experience he gained as lead engineer in the office that oversees research and development investment for the Air Force's aging aircraft fleet.

Paul says being a part of the investigation was a "great experience for all the wrong reasons". Columbia's accident on February 1, 2003 was tragic, but it allowed him to work with many "extraordinary" people—leaders in their fields of safety, science, engineering, and management. The board included 12 members and was aided by over 50 subject matter experts. Of the participants, only 10 received the Exceptional Achievement Medal.

Paul was one of three engineers in the Management and Treatment of Materials Group. They evaluated Columbia's material condition, including the external tank foam, reinforced carbon-carbon wing leading edge, and the heat resistant tile. Their findings, along with those of the other experts, were incorporated into a series of reports that identified the probable cause of the mishap and made recommendations for shuttle program improvements. @

